

The Other Half of the Picture of Being Physically Fit...NUTRITION

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We in the Air Force are changing our culture by placing an emphasis on physically preparing our bodies in an effort to be “Fit to Fight” by participating in squadron directed PT programs, but what about the other half of the picture? Exercise is only one part of developing and maintaining a healthy, physically fit body; the other part is the diet. Keep in mind what we eat in a day fuels our body and helps to determine our overall level of mental and physical performance.

The secret of having a successful eating plan is balance. It is important to have a well-rounded diet which includes a balance of carbohydrate (starches, fruit, milk, and vegetables), protein, and fat every day. The National Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Medicine recommends that healthy adults consume a diet in which 45-65% of total energy is obtained from carbohydrate, 10-35% from protein, and 20-35% from fat.

Additionally, the food choices that we make every day impact our health and determine how efficiently our bodies operate. Some practical hints to eating right are:

1. Eat a variety of foods in order to obtain all of our bodies’ needed vitamins and minerals.
2. Eat *at least* 3 meals a day since eating increases the body’s metabolism.
3. Choose complex carbohydrates such as whole-grain products and fresh fruits and vegetables which tend to be high in nutrients and low in Calories.
4. Choose low-fat products, especially when it comes to meat and dairy products.
5. Remember that beverages, including alcoholic beverages, can have a lot of empty Calories.
6. Watch those portion sizes! Too much of a good thing can be bad.

Also, realize that a lot of our food behaviors are based on habit and convenience. This is why changing how we eat is challenging. Therefore, you must prepare yourself mentally and implement a strategy to change those pre-existing food behaviors.

The bottom line is that food fuels our bodies and minds. Ultimately, it is up to every individual to make the good food and fitness choices which will lead to a sharp mind as well as a physically fit body.